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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001210

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY AMMAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY

REF: SECSTATE 13796

1. (U) Per reftel, Post is providing the following report on actions taken by the USG in Jordan during 2002.

2. (SBU) Begin text:

Introduction

Our human rights strategy in Jordan seeks to promote human rights through a) direct dialogue with the Jordanian Government and others, b) programs aimed at fostering elements of human rights, and c) reporting on human rights activity in Jordan.

A. Dialogue with the Jordanian Government and others

The US Embassy in Amman promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law with the Jordanian Government on a regular basis. We have a strong, multi-faceted relationship with Jordan, and human rights issues are an essential component. Our frank dialogue with the Government has yielded progress. Partly in response to the Embassy's frequent approaches on human rights issues, the Government announced in late 2002 the creation of a new Human Rights Directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is planning to train diplomats at U.S. institutions of higher education during 2003. Aside from the new Directorate, the Government in January 2003 announced a forthcoming Human Rights Commission, which the Government has indicated will be independent and have regulatory authority.

Aside from the Jordanian Government, we also meet regularly with local NGOS, UN officials and human rights officers of European nations, Canada and the European Council.

On labor issues we maintain an ongoing dialogue with key actors in the labor sector, including the GOJ, labor union leaders, International Labor Organization (ILO) officials, industrial park managers and factory owners. A primary focus is the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs), in which we encourage all parties to maintain acceptable labor standards for Jordan's growing textile industry. We note that in 2002, labor conditions in the QIZs were generally good with a trend toward improvement.

B. Embassy Programs

i. Public Diplomacy Programs

The Embassy funds programs to promote human rights through the Public Diplomacy Section, the cumulative value of which exceeded 100,000 USD in 2002.

Ongoing judicial reform projects involve a visitors exchange program for judges and judicial experts. Judicial reform is particularly important as Jordan is now a member of the WTO and enjoys a free trade agreement with the United States. We also fund English language training of Jordanian judges to broaden the range of information and contacts available to them. We fund an ongoing series of visits and locally based training programs for Jordanian journalists and editors, and translate "best practices" materials for journalists. In the area of Women and Democracy, we fund projects for women's advocacy, training of female candidates to run for elected office, and training staff and volunteers for such campaigns. We plan to continue our training program for women through the forthcoming parliamentary elections of 2003. Finally, in the area of civic education, we are supporting the translation of a civic education textbook that the Ministry of Education plans to use in an upcoming pilot project in Jordanian schools.

In October the Post sponsored a conference for civic education activists from a dozen Arab countries, including Jordan, who have founded "Arab Civitas", an NGO aimed at strengthening civic education in schools and universities throughout the Arab world.

Public Affairs and USAID plan on signing a PASA agreement funding human rights and democracy activities in coordination with an interagency committee at Post.

ii. USAID Programs

USAID programs address human rights issues by promoting a transparent, efficient and responsive public sector through good governance, legal reform, and improvement of civic institutions.

The good governance program, at work throughout Jordan, is aimed at improving the ability of Jordanians to influence public policy. The program focuses on, among other things, establishing E-government and judicial reform. The budget for good governance programs in 2002 exceeded 4 million USD. USAID programs work to increase the advocacy ability of business associations and NGOs. USAID provides technical assistance to private sector and civil society, (focusing in large part on women's business groups and organizations) which seek to participate in public policy making. The 2002 budget for these programs was approximately 400,000 USD.

Throughout its 2002 programs USAID supported women in areas such as economic participation (1,000,000 USD), access to health care (12,000,000 USD) and poverty alleviation (1,300,000 USD).

1C. Human Rights Reporting

In addition to the annual Human Rights Report and International Religious Freedom Report, the Embassy regularly reports human rights developments via the political and public diplomacy sections. During the year, we reported on developments in specific cases, such as Toujan Faisal's conviction in the State Security Court and subsequent pardon, and general developments in areas such as honor killings and improved labor conditions at the Qualifying Industrial Zones.

For more information on these and other cases, please see our annual Human Rights Report.

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